



A human needs-based systemic analysis of how we need to reorganize ourselves and society based on democracy, equity, cooperation, kindness, and sustainability.

Call it socialism, eco-socialism, a cooperative commonwealth, or communalism, this is essential reading for making a transition to a new social paradigm based on value-based human needs fulfillment.

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## Clear the Decks for Eco-Humanism

*“Not only isn’t there a widely-shared flexible and adaptable vision of what we are fighting for...there isn’t even much debate about such a thing...activists rarely put forward even the barest hints of an institutional vision, much less a compelling, well-worked out formulation that could inform strategy and provide hope and orientation.”<sup>1</sup>*

The specter of Trump cries out for systemic guidance for the flourishing of planet and people, concrete eco-humanist envisioning, conceptual readjustment, messaging, and strategy. The nomenclature of eco-humanism allows us the laser-like focus on the planetary needs and human activities that make us healthy and whole, answering the critical unanswered query laid out a century and a half ago: “These questions about the system of needs and system of labors—at what point is this to be dealt with?”<sup>2</sup>

### **System of Needs**

The methodological point of departure for any systemic and therefore revolutionary, stable and healthy eco-humanist vision must begin with identifying human needs, since humans will decide the fate of the planet. A vision of human value, not capital value, must fully encompass the totality of life’s true needs and all necessary labors to achieve those needs.

In the past 14 years Human Agenda<sup>3</sup> has asked over 70 groups—young old, US-born, immigrant, in three different countries—to identify their true human needs and the human needs of any social formation in any period of history<sup>4</sup>. Asking what it would take to survive alone and what any social formation would require to reproduce itself, the results of these inquiries are outlined in the human needs chart.

These are the needs of the social individual, *human* needs. Although such a composite typology may be incomplete or imperfect, as a starting point it provides great methodological strength and theoretical purpose, knowing that at least for over 1000 individuals, no fundamental aspect of the human condition has been overlooked. Meeting all of these needs for every individual on planet earth is the object of the next system.

Focusing our understanding and attention on the system of needs is quintessential for six purposes.

First, it is important to recognize that the types of human needs we all have on this earth are fundamentally trans-societal, panhuman needs. Our human condition unites us and distinguishes us from other species.

# HUMAN NEEDS

## Individual Needs

### Physiological Needs

- a. Water-Tissue Balance
- b. Air
- c. Food / Nutrients (satisfaction of hunger and the body's silent drives)
- d. Protection/Security of the Organism
- e. Elimination (defecation / urination)
- f. Rest-Activity Cycle
- g. Sexual/Sensual Needs

### Psychological Needs

- a. Love Ethic: caring, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, knowledge
- b. Emotional Security: feeling cared for and loved, sense of belonging,
- c. Spirituality: Connection to human beings, nature, and/or God or god(s)
- d. Sense of Purpose: adequate resolution of the "existential dilemma"
- e. Time Alone & Privacy
- f. Outlets of Emotional Release (to prevent unconscious self-destruction)

## Social Needs

### CARE WORK: Self and Family Maintenance

Meeting the physiological, psychological, and procreation needs of self, family, and immediate community, including food preparation, consumption, cleanliness, sensual/sexual needs, dressing, child and elder care, home maintenance, rituals, neighborhood work, etc.

### LABOR: Production of Goods and Services Sustainable labor at a "living wage"

Material Production (e.g. energy, shelter, tools, food, clothing, toys)

### Services

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Health Care                                       | 6. Life-Protection (military, fire, police, etc.) |
| 2. Distribution & Exchange                           | 7. Maintenance of Means of Production             |
| 3. Transportation                                    | 8. Teaching                                       |
| 4. Communication                                     | 9. Cultural & Ideological Identity                |
| 5. Administrative (clerical tasks, accounting, etc.) | 10. Care Work (for others)                        |

### EDUCATION: Life-Long Learning / Information Gathering

### AUTONOMY: Decision-Making at All Levels

International, national, regional, local, workplace, neighborhood, school, family, personal

### REALIZATION: Discretionary ("Free Time") Activity

Artistic, recreational, relaxing, sharing, reflecting, entertaining, volunteering



While arguing that the way we fulfill needs is historical and changing, Sean Sayers also explains that “This is not to deny there is a relatively unchanging core of biological needs, the minimal satisfaction of which is essential for the survival of the human organism.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly a reproducing community or social formation also possesses a relatively unchanging core typology of social needs such as care work, production, distribution, transportation, communication, and decision-making structures. While the form and manifestation of meeting specified individual or social needs vary, the core human need such as food consumption or energy production remains.<sup>6</sup>

Second, human beings need to become consciously aware of their real human needs in order to plan and strategize need fulfilling alternatives in their personal lives. Neglecting a single area can be personally catastrophic.

Third, decoding true human needs is critical to the creation of a humane, eco-humanist (or humanist) alternative and political economy. Deciphering what constitutes a real human need possesses huge implications for liberating vast numbers of human beings with respect to the quantity and quality of life, including the vast majority of humanity that materially does not lead a middle class existence and those deeply alienated consumer-oriented members of the human race.

Economic, political, and social activities that do not meet true human needs drive huge areas of capitalist development, adding nothing to human development. Advertising instead of accurate consumer reports, patriarchal relationships instead of relationships of shared power and responsibilities, military engagement in lieu of international mediation, pollution and ozone depletion instead of clean air, prostitution instead of healthy sexual relationships, authoritarian decision making structures instead of participatory engagement, gambling rather than constructive fun, incarceration of drug users instead of education and rehabilitation, criminalization instead of community development opportunities, emergency and acute health care instead of prevention, private insurance instead of public security, false publicity promoting untrue human needs versus education to address real human needs: the human costs are immense.

These evaluations of what constitute false versus true human needs are absolutely critical to developing humanist economic, political, social, and lifestyle alternatives. The daily struggle to make these evaluations and live this life must stem from such a human-needs based vision. Once true human needs are clearly articulated theoretically, politically, and personally, the issue of what it takes to meet those needs also becomes clear. The understanding of what activities we need to pursue to meet these needs provides the underlying foundation and praxis for the type of society we would like to create.

*Vivir bien* is one thing; defining it based on meeting our true human needs is another.

Fourth, the articulation of the *totality* of our needs is not only a requisite dialectical category for purposeful explanatory power, it is also critical to envisioning and encapsulating the very meaning of *system*. Without the full panoply of human needs we cannot anticipate the interacting human needs nor engage in planning with respect to the inter-connecting sub-systems that must be satisfied. Too often theorists have minimized the significance of the satisfaction of certain human needs (e.g. care work) at the expense of strategic goals and partners in struggle.

Fifth, the more specific identification of human needs transcends human rights conventions, millennial goals, and even the domains of Gross National Happiness (GNH). When real people identify the totality of real needs and address them, praxis becomes pithy and powerful.

Finally, comprehensive analysis of human needs and corresponding necessary human activity does not succumb to the danger of building artificial constructs or visionary castles in the air.<sup>7</sup> The needs are really lived and truly felt on an ongoing basis, crying out for their constant satisfaction.

### **System of Labors**

“Work” and “labor” possess so many inherited connotations that bind us and limit our visioning outcome that we need a new conceptual tool. By suggesting the need to further analyze the “system of labors” within the context of the “system of needs”, it is clear that Marx too wrestled with this problem.

Among many examples this wrestling is manifested in Hannah Arendt’s insistence upon distinguishing between “labor” and “work”, this former being represented primarily as “care work” and service work<sup>8</sup>; in the three types of “immaterial labor” offered by Hardt and Negri, in longstanding polemical distinctions between paid and unpaid labor<sup>9</sup>; in the methodological failure to recognize coexisting modes of production that incorporate all human needs; and in the questioning Marx’s theory of capital-value as inadequate to the tasks of incorporating the concerns of environmentalists and women.<sup>10</sup>

### **Human Need Fulfilling Activity (HNFA)**

A typology of true human needs is the key foundation upon which to build a conceptual tool that can supplant the concept of labor as an instrument of human liberation. A concept is necessary that can encompass true human needs based upon necessary individual and social reproduction, as the basis for a humanist as opposed to a capitalist social formation. With the dialectical category of totality as philosophical underpinning, and with time and matter as the ante-chambers of human development, human need fulfilling activity (HNFA) should be our focus in a vision for the better society.

Without a new concept like HNFA, tying particular human activity to meet a particular human need cannot occur.

Taking care of children, providing job training skills, eating, dealing with suicidal thoughts, producing automobiles, transporting people, purchasing bread, making decisions in all spheres of life, sexual needs, emotional security, cleaning buildings, washing the dishes and disposing of garbage all represent *particular* actions to fulfill *particular* human needs. Some of these activities meet needs covered by traditional concepts of labor and some do not. The growing commodification of personal services in advanced capitalist countries does not obviate the need for this concept: we need a method and a concept to describe how each need can be met by appropriate human activity.

The breadth of the concept is also its strength: without the capacity to address all human needs through necessary human activities, we will end up with an incomplete analysis and an incomplete vision. Without this attachment of human activity to meeting human needs we will not be able to develop the humanist division of labor necessary for the next system.

### **The Guiding Principle: A Humanist IDOL**

The principal and key methodological imperative in creating a humanist vision requires that we reach a level of specificity to understand what individual human beings are *doing* now versus what they would be doing in a humanist social formation. The emphasis must be on doing—on human action and not on wealth or consumption.

To accomplish this task of transformative praxis, the introduction of a new concept is necessary: the *individual* division of labor. The individual division of labor (IDOL) is a necessary addition to the development of useful concepts relating to the division of labor historically to provide explanatory power, such as the gender division of labor, the social division of labor (SDOL), the technical division of labor, and the international division of labor.

Individual division of labor refers to the actual and concrete differentiated, averaged human activities that individuals engage in, within any given society at any given time, as measured in time and quality of activity. The IDOL of a hunting and gathering society differs from that of a feudal society; the IDOL of residents in Silicon Valley today differ from the IDOL of the same “Valley of Hearts’ Delights” 60 years ago, and differs remarkably from an agricultural community in Bangladesh or Guatemala today; the IDOL of Donald Trump or Elon Musk differs drastically from that of a janitor or an unemployed person.

Different modes of production, combined modes of production, stages in modes of production, social formations, social classes and class fractions all possess their own distinctive *dominant* individual division of labor, based primarily upon available responses to the daily requirements

of the human body, the level of development of the productive forces, property relations, race, gender and class relations, institutional access and arrangements, and the social, technical and global divisions of labor.

Thus if we possessed the statistical information to see which areas of HNFAs (coupled with non-HNFAs in exploitative societies) that large groups of individuals participate in, in different societies, we would be able to see to what degree their true human needs are being addressed through which activities.

The critical methodological imperative needed to articulate a meaningful humanist vision requires that we select those areas of HNFA that correspond to what we accept as human rights and responsibilities to allow every human being to have fulfilling relationships, relative autonomy, and well-rounded lives. *The humanist individual division of labor (IDOL) constitutes the key organizing principle in elaborating a humanist vision.*

The humanist IDOL parts from the perspective that to engage in as healthy, productive, ethical, caring, and well-rounded lives as possible, understanding that life's possibilities for individuals and social formations are always in motion, it is necessary to divide up the time and activity in the satisfaction of life's real needs in ways that meet all of the combined social and individual (e.g. human) needs.

It is critical that opportunity and responsibility be provided to each and every able person in five areas:

1. CARE WORK: Self and Family Maintenance
2. LABOR: Production of a Good or Service "at a living wage" with Reduced Work Hours
3. EDUCATION: Life-Long Learning / Information Gathering
4. AUTONOMY: Decision-Making at All Levels
5. REALIZATION: Discretionary ("Free Time") Activity

The five areas are essential to individual and social survival, reproduction, responsibility, and development. Let us examine key underpinnings of this vision for individuals and society.

**1. CARE WORK: Self and Family Maintenance**

Meeting the physiological, psychological, and procreation needs of self, family, and immediate community, including food preparation, consumption, cleanliness, sensual/sexual needs, dressing, child and elder care, home maintenance, rituals, neighborhood work, etc.

Care work incorporates the satisfaction of both the individual physiological and psychological needs as well as the social care work for family and immediate community as self-defined.

Within a humanist IDOL self-care and dual gender involvement in family maintenance allow patriarchal relationships and the second shift of women to be reshaped into fair and equitable

gender roles. Care work not only enables the reproduction of our species but also accepts responsibility for our maintenance and the manifestation of our dependence as human beings upon each other, from birth to death.

Care work is unpaid labor, the labor of a love ethic of caring, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge towards ourselves, our loved ones, and our beloved community.

Without the individual commitment to employment in material production and the delivery of

**2. LABOR: Production of a Good or Service “at a living wage” with Reduced Work Hours**

Material Production (e.g. energy, shelter, tools, food, clothing, toys)

Services

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. Health Care                                       | 6. Life-Protection (military, fire, police, etc.) |
| b. Distribution & Exchange                           | 7. Maintenance of Means of Production             |
| c. Transportation                                    | 8. Teaching                                       |
| d. Communication                                     | 9. Cultural & Ideological Identity                |
| e. Administrative (clerical tasks, accounting, etc.) |   |

socially and individually necessary services, continuity of life is threatened in any social formation. Unless working hours are reasonable in both length and remuneration, the temporal and material preconditions are not sustained to avail individuals of the other human need fulfilling activities that make us as human as possible at the specific stage of species development.

Within a humanist IDOL reduced work hours (RWHs) are the fulcrum upon which human development rests, the foundation of happiness for people and planet. By constantly reducing the working hours needed to meet true human needs, through automation and retraining based on planning as well as optimizing rather than maximizing consumption, human liberation becomes possible. Reduced work hours provides the time needed to participate in the four other quintessential activities for human development and thus leads to a caring and well-rounded existence.

The purpose of the socially planned production of material things and delivery of essential services such as health care and transportation is to provide the necessary material basis and service infrastructure for each and every human being on the planet. It invokes the corresponding responsibility of each one of us to engage with material objects and services in a responsible way using best practices with values espoused later in this essay with respect to humanizing individual actions and institutional arrangements.

As a transitional tool it is useful to think of labor in material production or services as remunerated at a sustainable rate. In this sense, it is the only “paid” labor in the transition to a humane society.

**3. EDUCATION: Life-Long Learning / Information Gathering**

Without access to lifelong learning, the responsibilities and rights of knowledge and information that provide a key basis for both surviving and thriving cannot occur.

Within a humanist IDOL education with respect to meeting all of our human needs and the specialized knowledge required for the production of goods or services must be publicly available to all. For this reason the accuracy and reliability of information, unlike information in our current social formation, is paramount. Learning is unpaid labor.

#### **4. AUTONOMY: Decision-Making at All Levels**

Personal, family, school, neighborhood, workplace, community, region, nation, world

Without autonomous and informed participation in decision-making from the family unit and workplace to all levels of government, democracy and the promise of horizontal decision-making cannot take place.

Within a humanist IDOL autonomy in decision making has a double *loci*. First of all, the right to self-determination of historically oppressed groups must be accepted and respected.

Secondly, healthy spaces must exist for meaningful decision-making in every sphere of life. Existing structures such as authoritarian families that squelch the opinions of children, hierarchical workplaces that operate without the voice and consent of labor, representative democracies that replace citizen engagement with voting for the evil of two lessers every four years, and state paternalism must be replaced by active and engaged citizens with the time and institutional arrangements for relative individual autonomy.

Such democratic autonomous decision making is unpaid.

#### **5. REALIZATION: Discretionary ("Free Time") Activity**

Artistic, recreational, relaxing, sharing, reflecting, entertaining, volunteering

Without discretionary free time activities we could not develop our individual passions and uniqueness, remain sane, or fully grow or self-realize as social individuals. Self-actualization sat at the top Abraham Maslow's pyramidal hierarchy of needs for a reason: it represents that space where we can re-define ourselves and engage in those activities that provide a level of joy beyond those spaces that require social cooperation and responsibility.

Such realization of self is unpaid.

A humanist individual division of labor based on meeting our human needs as the goal and guiding principle of our journey on planet earth requires further explanation and elaboration. The philosophical objection that such a guiding principle is overly prescriptive, the importance of unpaid labor, the question of rights and responsibilities, and the relationship of this transformative vision to a theory of alienation must all be addressed.

The issue of values, the relationship of the humanist IDOL to our environment (hence eco-humanism), the need for correspondence between a humanist IDOL and a humanist SDOL, the restructuring or replacement of our current economic, political, and social institutions, humanist messaging, and strategy will all be left for the last section regarding the next system.

### **Prescriptive Visioning**

Utopian visioning has led to a plethora of subjective schemas based upon nuanced preferences of the individual dreamer. Frequently without a materialist mooring and a feeble understanding of the role of the state, superstructure, and social relations, such envisioning delinks the essential and sustainable conditions of human beings and the natural environment from the utopian denouement. Engels, for example, criticized utopian socialists for conceiving of such alternatives and then trying to convince everyone of the superiority of their alternative.

By placing the totality of the foundational conditions of existence of the healthy reproduction of people and planet at the center of a next system and planting our alternative in eco-humanism, we avoid environmental and social hallucination. To the extent that the Paris Commune attempted to re-organize economic, political, *and social life* Marx viewed it as a harbinger of a future alternative.

While overly prescriptive visioning is anathema to a strategy for change, the positing of the humanist IDOL is not. Are the rights and responsibilities of care work, labor for the betterment of society, life-long learning, participatory engagement, and self-actualization—the core elements of the humanist IDOL—beyond the scope of envisioning a future next system? We think not. Rooted in material, political, social, and environmental necessity, the flame of eco-humanism burns brightly to replace the cinders of capitalism.

### **Unpaid Labor**

Marx's labor theory of value and concept of socially necessary labor time over-emphasized the role of material commodity production in the competitive phase of capitalist development to leave us with concepts and categories tied to a specific area and time of human reproduction. The materialist foundation (and corresponding superstructure) for the analysis of capitalism and history provide penetrating explanatory power; however, they violate that imperative Hegelian category of totality.

The humanist IDOL, based upon all necessary human needs and human activity re-organized into a healthy whole, contains elements crying out for a more comprehensive and inclusionary vision than the dominant economic laws and tendencies of that stage of history. To that extent, the delineation of the *unpaid* nature of a humanist vision incorporating care work, life-long learning,

participatory engagement, and self-actualization was purposeful. All of these human activities, while unpaid in capitalist social formations, are quintessential to the next system.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

Activists who loathe ascribing to the principle of personal responsibility because of its Republican association need to get over it. When Mahatma Gandhi was asked which was more important, social rights or individual responsibility, he did not hesitate to choose the latter. How do social rights exist without individual responsibility?

In the grid of individual rights and responsibilities and social rights and responsibilities everything begins with the person. Without conscious individual human activity no social justice takes place on planet earth.

People in capitalist social formations are not taught that they have responsibilities for their own self-care, care for their family, for their workplace, for their life-long learning, for participatory engagement in critical institutions, and for their own self development. On the altar of consumption and wealth accumulation as the end-all and be-all, the ideological crisis with respect to such duties and caring have led to the frequent destruction of self, the disintegration of family, indoctrination instead of real learning, and the crisis of civic and political systems. Ironically but understandably, the most potent responsibility that most Americans feel is the responsibility to their employer in this social formation. Such “responsibility” is not related to their own self-improvement on the job, but rather to the demands of profit making.

Paradoxically, the United States did not ratify the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (IC-ESC). Nor have the ESC rights ever been placed into the U.S. Constitution, making our federal constitution much weaker than the South African, Ecuadorian, or Cuban constitutions. The progressive realization of such rights which binds signatory nations is anathema to U.S. policy and practice. Instead, we suffer from a different ESC: *exploitation* is the foundation of our economic system, *speculation* the foundation of our financial system, and *corruption* the essence of our electoral system. We have legal “rights” and receive the indoctrinating corresponding messaging and values daily to exploit, speculate, and corrupt.

The unpaid labor of care work, life-long learning, participatory engagement, and self-realization—as well as the foundational reduced working hours to allow these to happen—are part and parcel of an eco-humanist next system. As a transitional tool, it may be necessary to remunerate only the labor of the individual in the production of goods or the delivery of services, since this is the biggest and most abstract responsibility of our day and week. However, all of the five areas of human activity are necessary and essential to individual and social development. At a given point of history all five areas of rights and responsibilities will become ingrained and natural without the need for a monetary equivalent.

## **A New Theory of Alienation**

Historically the development of the theory of alienation has been based upon the separation of laborers from their means of production. While such alienation is still the critical component of capitalist control and worker domination, it nonetheless should be expanded to include separation from nature and the quantity and quality of life suffered by members of each social class as it fails to engage in the areas of the humanist IDOL.

A concept of alienation under a capitalist social formation like the United States that includes the actual separation of individuals from the satisfaction of their essential needs possesses immense heuristic value and political purpose. When reviewing the individual and social human needs, it becomes radically apparent that allies in our struggle for a better society include people who, for example,

- Do not possess sufficient income to take care of their most pressing human needs
- Lack material goods such as home, a car, food, or clothing
- Have lost all sense of purpose and reason to exist
- Do not have access to public transportation
- Lack adequate health care
- Lack the knowledge or accurate information to succeed in different areas of life
- Are locked out of meaningful participation in meaningful economic, political, and social institutions
- Lost their relationship to nature

Silicon Valley is a poster child for over-work. On one end of the economic spectrum, professionals including software engineers and H1-B professionals work long hours to produce the greatest new technological device. On the other end of the spectrum low wage workers like janitors and food service workers must work two jobs to pay for the essentials of life like rent, food, and transportation. In each case, these over-worked producers of surplus value are reduced to a shell of their potential selves. They have no time to eat right or exercise right or know their spouse or children or engage in the community or find accurate information or have a hobby or interact with nature or do something they love. Severed from essential human activities that would make them whole, they ossify in their labor. Silicon Valley is no exception in the United States of America. In those areas of high unemployment in the U.S. the separation and alienation particularly due to joblessness overwhelm our motivation to be more.

Once we can name the need and organize together to meet the specific need—and the constellation of human needs and human beings—we can change our society and our reality. If

we cannot name the need and understand the origin of the need we lack the consciousness for anti-capitalist organizing and an eco-humanist alternative.

### **Eco-Humanist Values**

The dominant values of our current economic and social formation, all entirely legal, include the economic *exploitation* of workers here and abroad to enhance the bottom line; financial *speculation*, which has become the most prolific producer of wealth; and the accompanying political *corruption* based upon constitutional unlimited purchasing of elections by corporations and the rich.

While the vestiges of exploitative relations, uncaring acts, discriminatory practices, patriarchal arrangements, and environmental despoliation will probably never be eradicated and no perfect *homo sapien* social formation erected, we can ascribe to daily values to constantly transform ourselves and our institutions. Absolutely nothing is more important than naming our values and living our values, on a 24-hour basis.

Five over-arching values are necessary to guide us on our path to a next system: democracy, equality, cooperation, kindness, and sustainability. Whole treatises have been produced on each one of these values.

By *democracy* is meant the responsibility and right of participatory engagement, inscribed in the Venezuelan Constitution as “protagonism”. By affirming the role of the state in creating conditions for deep participatory engagement in critical institutions affecting lives as a lever for human development, the constitution is unique. Democracy implies the struggle for consensus in decision making.

By *equality* is meant the creation and reproduction of economic, political, and social institutions that are fair and just. *Equity* can be used synonymously. In the sense that species contradictions never end and the constellation of human relations and institutions is vast, the goal of parity and not indistinguishable equality comprises this humanist goal.

Similar to autonomy that contains the dual notions of self-determination and democratic participatory engagement, equality contains the dual notions of parity of justice in economic and political relations and equity in racial, gender, and ethnic access to all of the benefits and institutions of society.

By *cooperation* is meant the transformation of private to public ownership and control of the dominant means of production and institutions. Only through the restructuring and institutionalization of cooperative entities that shape our lives can we begin that righteous historic metamorphosis of shifting human nurture to human nature.

By *kindness* is meant the enactment of caring, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge—the love ethic of Eric Fromm as enhanced by bell hooks—on a daily basis. Kindness is not an option. No one can imagine parents not implementing these traits when their baby is 6 months old, when that critical period of infant dependence and adult cooperation is required. None of us would be alive.

We live the uncaring and unkind dominant values of exploitation, authoritarianism, patriarchy, and discrimination, not to mention speculation and corruption. None of these can be turned into its polar opposite without kindness and caring.

By *sustainable* is meant the care and reproduction of the planet. If our human activities are but the theater, the planet is the stage. The drive toward growth and consumption attached to the profit motive have hurtled our environment toward tipping points to such a degree that those alive today may be the last to experience climate stability.

Every decision that we make and every action that we take, similar to screening tools of the Gross National Happiness index of Bhutan, must engage in the inquiry: Is it democratic, equitable, cooperative, kind, and sustainable? As posited by Gus Speth, we need “new values, motivations, and habits of thought to infuse and animate American life.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Not Humanism But Eco-Humanism**

Ecology has not been addressed at the level deserving of its significance because human beings are the architect of themselves in the conditions they have been given before they can understand that the architecture fails without preserving and improving those given conditions.

That architecture is on the cusp of failure.

In studying the potential collapse of our ecosystems, internationally recognized scientists have identified nine “planetary life support systems” essential to human survival. They include:

- Climate change
- Ocean acidification
- Stratospheric ozone depletion
- Interference with global phosphorous and nitrogen cycles
- Rate of the loss of biodiversity
- Global freshwater use
- Land-system change
- Aerosol loading
- Chemical pollution

According to these scientists, three of the nine planetary boundaries have already been surpassed: climate change, the rate of loss of biodiversity, and the nitrogen cycle.<sup>12</sup>

Unbridled capitalist growth and harmful waste products have led to “species extinction, air and water pollution, genetically modified organisms, desertification, deforestation, soil depletion, and the ever-present possibility of nuclear warfare”.<sup>13</sup>

Without a commitment to keep our natural resources healthy and whole we have a horribly dim future as a species. This is the difference between eco-humanism, which seeks to optimize the use of resources and focus on what *activities* make us great as human beings, and capitalism, which seeks to maximize commodity production and the use of resources and focus on the *wealth and consumption* of the few while impoverishing our planet.

### **Correspondence between a Humanist IDOL and a Humanist SDOL**

The first step in understanding the need for a humanist individual humanist division of labor to correspond to a humanist social division of labor is to recognize that a capitalist individual division of labor, as exemplified in the plight of Silicon Valley, exists today. Just as a humanist IDOL would allow access as a matter of right to meeting all the basic human needs of individuals in the next system through the allocation of time and resources in humane ways, the capitalist IDOL in its many iterations blocks access to those same human needs and human activities for nearly every human being of every social class. Very few have the integrated human need fulfilling lifestyle that the humanist IDOL envisions.

Second, we must understand that the capitalist division of labor exists for the purpose of capital accumulation. To that extent, the existing structures, institutions, and individual roles, from the United Nations and IMF and MNCs and banks, to state agencies and media and local governments and families, all exist within the confines and demands of such capital accumulation. The capitalist SDOL in the United States through its institutions defines roles, what is and is not produced for whom, the number of hours of employment, gender roles in the family and society, the quality of work, the type of information and education, and differential access to all of those need areas that make us deformed.

Finally, while the capitalist social division of labor and the capitalist individual division of labor coincide to produce socially maiming institutions and alienated individuals, these are not necessary or permanent arrangements. Another world is possible because other institutions that meet the values of democracy, equality, cooperation, kindness, and sustainability are necessary.

In order to create the value-based structural framework and institutional alternatives for the satisfaction of the needs of everyone through HNFA, to create a humanist IDOL where everyone meets their needs through their activities, existing structures must be modified or replaced. A minuscule number of existing institutions meet the criteria that would allow for a humanist social

division of labor. Time and activities, as outlined in the humanist IDOL, with resources and time activities divided up into liberating ways, would need their institutional supports.

Correspondence of the IDOL and the SDOL under eco-humanism demands the relative eradication of both time poverty and material poverty, feasible at the current level of development of the global productive forces but not exactly on the mind of the 1%.

We of the 99% can change all of that by insisting on new values in our current institutional arrangements but more importantly by engaging in the “fight and build” strategies suggested at the World Social Forum in Tunisia and the U.S. Social Forum in San Jose and Philadelphia. We need to fight all forms of oppression in our capitalist countries, building a movement of movements, and at the same time build cooperative competing economic, political and social institutions. Capitalist forms will not be replaced now or even in seven generations unless we start replacing them now to overcome the crises of global warming, overproduction, and alienation.

### **Restructuring and Replacing Current Structures and Institutions**

The socialist trilogy so potently developed in The Socialist Alternative by Michael Lebowitz provides a starting but not ending point for the reorganization of society along eco-humanist lines.

1. Collective ownership of the means of production is imperative, at least for all the major means of production.
2. Social production based on mental and manual labor organized by workers builds cooperation and solidarity among workers. Potentially this builds cooperation with the community also if workers and community plan and work together.
3. The objective is the “satisfaction of communal needs and purposes”.<sup>14</sup>

This narrow materialist postulate at least has the satisfaction of human needs as the goal, even though it does not specify those needs. While this “socialist triangle” portends to overcome traditional definitions of socialism focused on capturing the state and nationalizing the means of production, reference to human activity in the delivery of services is undervalued; reproduction of the species through care work is not explicit; protagonism outside of the spaces of the workplace is not defined; values associated with productive activity are not made clear.

The communist or socialist mode of production envisioned by Marx assumed that socialist relations of production led by associated producers working together democratically could unleash additional productive forces hindered by capitalist relations of production. In addition to machine technology and technological advances, the conscious and well-trained worker would also be a productive force.

Marx could not fully envision a socialist society at least in part because of his own premonition: it was necessary to analyze the “system of needs” and “system of labors”. As the broad outlines of a next *system* are contemplated, it is absolutely essential that the human needs and labors in an eco-humanist system with their interlocking and inter-related conditions be fully analyzed.

The conditions of existence for each need incorporating the values that can move us forward must be broken down and analyzed. Manufacturing, transportation, education, care work, housing, participatory democracy, and communications each possess their own prerequisites, but if the five values are implemented seriously great strides can be made.

To provide one example—health care—there are a plethora of conditions necessary for human health. A single payer health care system may be a *beginning* point—we would all like to know we have health care access in the moment of physical or mental breakdown—but what about how the health workers are organized? Who produces the hospital beds and the bandages, and how are *those* workers organized? What about our own *individual* responsibility toward a healthy condition? What policies best benefit a baby?

Health workers and bed manufacturers should be working in democratic cooperative structures scaled to meaningful human interaction and control, being kind to each other and the planet. Individually, healthy food (what we place in our body) and healthy exercise (whether we exercise or not) are not secondary considerations. Maternal and paternal family leave policies are critical to infant development. In practically every setting the social rights and cooperatively associated workers accompany a strong need for individual responsibility in the given need, not only knowing best practices but embodying them in praxis.

In his seminal work What Then Must Be Done Gar Alperovitz examines economic institutions in the United States that have already democratized wealth and other economic sectors that could be democratized. These include socialized enterprises and services like GM, AIG, and health care; public banks and financial institutions; the commons, or federal, state and municipal ownership of land utilities, and services; and cooperatives including worker-owned, union, housing, and consumer cooperatives.

For each human need such examples provide a guiding light for the future, especially when such institutions embody democratic, egalitarian, cooperative, kind, and sustainable values.

In addition to such leading economic enterprises other equally significant foci must be examined, from the family to the educational system to the neighborhood to governance structures at each level of society, which also must be imbued with these values.

Each transformed institution must consider not only ownership of the means of production and democratic control of the human need area to be satisfied for all, but also the other values of equitable access, cooperation, kindness, and sustainability and the requirement of individual

responsibility. The application of these combined conscious criteria can lead to the transformation needed for a next system.

### **Eco-Humanist Messaging**

Messaging must be explicit and easily understandable. The guiding principle of eco-humanist Care work, Labor with reduced working hours, Education for life, Autonomy in democratic decision making, and Realization of self is CLEAR, and the DECKS values of Democracy, Equality, Cooperation, Kindness and Sustainability can lead us on the path to a humane next system. *Clear the decks for eco-humanism.*

The terms democratic socialism, collectivism, communism, pluralist commonwealth, eco-socialism, and other such concepts can all be incorporated into a next system concept that must base itself on the needs of planet and people, eco-humanism.

The collectivist ideal embodied in all of the above concepts for system change underlies the core of the transformation away from the individualistic ego-driven capitalism that must be overcome. However, that philosophical category of totality again imposes itself: we have individual needs as part of the human condition and we must accept and promote individual responsibility as a method to meet those needs. Individual rights and responsibilities and social rights and responsibilities provide the full matrix of self social realization.

The concept of humanism alone as a self-standing term is incomplete. Only when we take into account our relationship to the planet—and to the entire universe—do we have a full next *system*.

Humanism as an existing philosophy also carries its loaded connotations that do not incorporate the breadth of an eco-humanist vision built upon the complete set of needs for a healthy planet and healthy people. Clear the decks for eco-humanism.

### **Strategy: An Eco-Humanist Theory of Change in Practice**

When then President Obama stated, as he did on December 16, 2016, that “we’ve lost track of what it is that we’re about and what we stand for”, he demonstrates that he is a neo-liberal dreamer with an impossible capitalist vision that accepts the underlying legality of exploitation, speculation, and corruption.

The “hope” and “change” of Obama never contemplated the realization of the needs of everyone. We need a way forward based upon a dramatic change in hardware, not the limited software that Obama accepts. With Trump on the way the BC that he brings—brazen capitalism—cries out for transformative theory and practice.<sup>15</sup>

All-rounded human development requires overcoming the multiple alienations existing in HNFA categories under our current social formation, and their fulfillment within a humanist individual division of labor.

The humanist IDOL calls first and foremost for the improvement of life for all based upon an increasingly diminishing work week. By having the time and joy to maximize discretionary activity, based upon the optimization of responsibility and distribution of time and resources in all five areas of human need fulfilling activity, a new dawn emerges for human beings.

If the goal is multi-sided lives allowing democracy, equity, cooperation, kindness and sustainability for everyone, *we need an action plan that will take into account all necessary human need fulfilling activities. We need an eco-humanist vision based on human and planetary needs and an action plan to operationalize that vision.*

As humanist activists we must simultaneously participate in multiple dialectical instances of transformation, accepting the responsibility and the joy of personal, programmatic, policy, and political changes that can promote correspondence between a humanist SDOL and a humanist IDOL. The health care example is but one instance of how personal, programmatic, policy, and political action is necessary in a single area of need.

At this juncture in U.S. history we cannot expect that there will be some revolutionary denouement that will instantly and simultaneously resolve all the human needs contained in the concepts of a humanist SDOL and IDOL. Progress will occur in fits and starts, with interruptions and retrogressions, occasionally breaking through with structural transformations that serve large numbers of people to improve their lives. Working assiduously to address all human needs in all social formations, we must work to capture economic spaces and broaden political spaces with planetary urgency and personal kindness. We must:

1. ***Embody DECKS values and CLEAR goals in our daily existence.*** Starting with the family, the workplace, and the neighborhood, we can build out and begin to create the alternative eco-humanist culture that one day will become dominant. Democratic, egalitarian, cooperative, kind, and sustainable values incorporated in the areas of care work, labor, life-long learning, decision making, and self-realization can lead to *behaviors* that later lead to *systems* change. Our behaviors will impact our children and future generations. In our relationships we must be the change, participating in the HNFAs that leave no doubt that as social individuals we should be emulated.
2. ***Fight for reforms and a movement of movements within our current system.*** We cannot afford to self-isolate. We need to be in the forefront of participation in fighting for human rights for all and a sustainable ecology. In the United States we have a catalyst: Donald Trump will build our unity. As attacks on the planet and human beings subject our current system to relentless degradation through undemocratic, unequal, uncooperative, unkind,

and unsustainable actions, we take the high road. As a response to privatization, we clear the decks through conscious, deliberative, and coordinated social action.

3. ***Build alternative eco-humanist structures and institutions, brick by brick.*** As caring activists seeking to improve the lives of our families and others, we have the radical responsibility to build the next system of new institutions based on DECKS values and HNFAs. We can start with how we engage in our current institutions to transform them, but conscious construction of alternative institutions will be paramount. Unlike well-meaning reform-minded activists who only seek reforms within our current decaying system, we must seek to overcome the profound alienations we suffer and build cooperatives, public banks, municipal utilities run democratically, public campaign finance, and socialized enterprises. Whenever there is an opening for a structural transformation we must take decisive action. In all instances we need to consume consciously and directly from the alternative enterprises and institutions developed along eco-humanist lines, to build the alternative. The quantitative actions we take can reach the qualitative system we seek by employing many of the remarkable contributions already set out by Next System contributors. “Fight or Build”, the slogan of the World Social Forum in Tunisia, was no empty platitude: unless we replace capitalism with an eco-humanist IDOL we *will* live in this decaying system, for generations to come.
4. ***Fight for political power—and keep it.*** A viable non-violent struggle for change ultimately calls for an electoral vehicle in the democratic fight for political power. Building local party-neutral formations like the Richmond Progressive Alliance can lay the foundations for the larger political formation that will emerge. The party or parties that develop in coalition will create the conscious political alternative we seek. Once political power is gained, continue to embody the DECKS values and CLEAR vision, or that political power will be lost.
5. ***Live what we love.*** Let’s have fun, lighten up, and love the changes we need to make. We are not super-human but we can modify our existence and act like it. With honesty, love, justice, and caring on our side, we can’t help but enjoy. Eco-humanist theory, practice, and values are an unstoppable triumvirate.

People need time and resources for their self-realization, to actualize their multi-faceted human nature. This must be accomplished within a paradigm of individual responsibility and social rights to establish and retain conditions that permit the realization of everyone. In an epoch in which the development of the productive forces has reached a point where self social realization can be attained to meet our basic human and planetary needs and engage in fulfilling lives, it is incumbent that we take personal and political action to reorganize and extend our economic, political, and social relations.

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<sup>1</sup> Z Magazine, “This Yawning Emptiness”, June 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, Grundrisse, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1097), p. 528.

<sup>3</sup> A human rights organization located in San Jose, California founded in 2002.

<sup>4</sup> True human needs are distinguished from false human needs and wants.

<sup>5</sup> Sean Sayers, Marxism and Human Nature, Routledge, London and New York, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that these core human needs—individual and social—will not be modified in the future as the species develops.

<sup>7</sup> Engels criticized utopian socialists for conceiving of an alternative and then trying to convince everyone of the superiority of their alternative. To the extent that the Paris Commune attempted to re-organize economic, political, *and social life* Marx viewed it as a harbinger of a future alternative.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Arendt, The Human Condition, University of Chicago Press, Illinois, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts / London, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> See Nancy Brumback, “Labor, Nature, and Value Theory”: “Essentially, the environmentalist and feminist criticisms of the theory of value are the same: both hold that if surplus value consists entirely of the unpaid value of abstract labor, accounting is made for neither the wealth contributed to society by the labor of women in the family, i.e., domestic labor, not that contributed by nature.”

<sup>11</sup> James Gustave Speth, America the Possible, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2012, p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> Chris Williams, Ecology and Socialism, Haymarket Books, Chicago, Illinois, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Michael A. Lebowitz, The Socialist Alternative, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2010. Pp. 86-87.

<sup>15</sup> “Theory can be realized in a people only insofar as it is the realization of the needs of that people.” Karl Marx, “Introduction, Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law”, Vol 3, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Collected Works, International Publishers, New York, 1975.

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